

**Howard County Racial Equity Task Force
Economic & Workforce Development Meeting Minutes
Chair: Candace Dodson-Reed
December 9, 2020
APPROVED**

Panelists Present – Aaron Johnson, Ayesha Holmes, Leonardo McClarty, Minah Woo, Nat Alston, Pamela Pina, Roger Barnes, Lauren Marra (Facilitator), Michael Harris (D2), Ashley Alston (D2), Theo Wimberly (Council Staff).

Present via Call-in: Young Ran Smith

Not Present: Jonathan Studdard

Opening:

Candace Dodson-Reed did attendance and introduced the meeting.

Discussion Points:

Candace started with the approval of last meetings' minutes

- Moved to approve the meeting minutes from November 18th
 - Second by Roger Barnes
 - Approved by everyone

Candace facilitated check-in question: What is one value that guides your life and why?

Aaron- stewardship guides his life; gives his best effort in all that he does

Ayesha- integrity guides her life personally and professionally; honesty

Minah-service guides her life; all about helping others achieve their goals and to give back.

Nat-echoed Minah (service and giving back)

Pamela-genuine; mindful of your intentions

Leonardo-being a man of his word

Roger-to make a difference (in the community, work, other personal areas)

Lauren-inclusion; recognizing each person's individuality and respecting the value of each life/voice

Michael-tenacity; not giving up or letting "no" dictate his future/goals

Ashley-consistency; staying true to what you know and who you are

Theo-working smarter; making good decisions

Candace-authenticity; staying true to her values

Lauren began the discussion by reviewing the kickoff

- The purpose: Must recommend legislative actions to the County Council that remedies racial disparities and inequities in the community by indicating disparate incomes, applicable studies, best practices and local data to ascertain pertinent information on issues related to racial equity and identifying metrics for measuring progress and improvement of racial equity. #2 identifying new county policies that will help racial equity. #3 recommending legislation. #4 recommending action for other county entities that use county finds can implement to improve upon racial equity.
 - Question asked by Roger-will the purpose be segregated based on by topic
 - Answered by Lauren- yes, this group is specifically for Economic and Workforce Development Policy
 - Question about language asked by Candace, specifically BIPOC

- Answered by Lauren- retracted that acronym, but wanted to respect self-identity and to not group everyone in one group; allowing people to use the terms based on preference; using “I” statements
 - Minah suggested that we have a set of definitions that the group agrees with and use the same language
 - Leonardo mentioned how perhaps BIPOC doesn’t acknowledge everyone’s experiences and lumps all of the minorities together
- Roles and responsibilities
 - Next two months will be introductory and building relationships
 - Then they will phase into research
- Racial Equity/Racial Theory
 - Social construction
 - Develop an anti-racist mindset, make anti-racist behaviors, and change policies and structures
 - Minah-moving away from reacting and blaming and looking at the root cause of the issue
 - 4 dimensions of racism
 - Internalized
 - Intrapersonal
 - Institutional
 - Structural

Group Roles and Agreements led by Candace

- Agreements read by Roger-
 - Respect people’s time, resources, identities, experiences, and expertise
 - Silence technology and stay “checked in”
 - Connect to core values and speak from the heart
 - Be accountable about your commitments and honest about your limitations
 - Give each other and ourselves grace that these are unprecedented times
 - Keep the task force purpose and specific meeting goals in mind
- Vice Chair position
 - Responsibilities- take over meeting if Candace cannot make it
 - Aaron volunteered to be Vice Chair
- Must complete an Open Meeting Acts Training
 - Have 2 people responsible to make sure they are adhering to those policies
 - Minah and Aaron volunteered (Candace offered to retake the training just in case)

Defining diversity and equity in the Workforce and Economic Development led by Lauren

- Think expansively when considering data (possible responsibility for group members)
- Open discussion about diversity and equity in the workforce and economic development
 - Leonardo-taking into account hiring practices, purchasing or procurement, ensuring that all groups are getting fair opportunity. Doing everything you can to ensure all parties have an equal opportunity; bring more attention to systemic racism
 - Candace- thinking about access, being intentional about whom you are “inviting to the table.” More research on pathways, specifically in K-12 and Howard Community College (HCC) and exposing new career paths
 - Minah-up to this group to answer the question “why they aren’t invited to the table/already at the table?” Identifying the barriers that some people must go

through and making ourselves and others aware (thinking long term and acknowledging the systemic aspect)

- Roger- Equity as a principle is great, but we are missing the underlying barriers. We must remove those barriers; overcome the history of non-inclusion
- Ayesha-Talk about raising minimum wage and making it a livable wage of Howard County; opportunity to learn about how to make a livable wage; allow people to succeed in all aspects of their lives
 - Leonardo- training and development of skills; if you do not have the skills to progress, the conversation about only minimum wage won't be the proper solution
 - Roger-agreed with Leonardo and suggested teaching younger people entrepreneurial skills (teaching the basics); help create momentum to overcome
- **Common Themes:**
 - Hiring and procurement practices
 - Access and opportunity and examination of the barriers
 - The county system's buying and procurement process, like the education and commercial side
 - Examining the presence of or lack of pathways for diverse groups into certain career fields
 - Economic Policy
 - Raising minimum wage to become a livable wage
 - Workforce Support
 - Trainings and development
 - Presence or lack of education and support in the community for entrepreneurship as a pathway to financial success and independence

Question asked by Lauren-What should we specifically address?

- Aaron-asked a question regarding the uniformity (or lack thereof) of the County's punitive measures against workforce discrimination/exclusion
- Minah-think about identifying the disparities between those struggling; talked about apprenticeship at HCC (answers the question about livable wage, training, and education) and how it includes many diverse groups (women, minorities, others who would normally not be given the opportunity); Who is participating in the workforce? If not, what is the barrier? Examine the demographics
- Ayesha-brought of the point about Jobs vs. Career choices; transportation options; intersectionality; understanding the income distribution across the county and the percent of earners.
- Roger- potential disparities regarding participation for the commercial side, post construction of buildings, inclusion in shopping centers, etc; disparities dealing with the County procurement system, businesses of color engagement with the office of purchasing; disparities of the level of engagement regarding building being constructed, capital projects, post construction; overall, more transparency
- Pam-what is the baseline that we currently have in the county, and what programs do we have in place?

Question asked by Lauren-What do people most want to see or know?

- Candace-began thinking about inviting experts in various areas, departments, or governments that we want to come and share information and present to this committee; for example, inviting the superintendent and the President of HCC (pathways), inviting the director of procurement of Howard County (procurements), and inviting director of purchasing for the county and school system; starting a list of questions we would like to ask the experts
- Aaron-thinking about broader community engagement; bring in people with “no title;” facilitating or soliciting ideas, input, and questions that young members of communities are asking themselves; include everyone’s experience
 - Theo answered- there will be a public hearing for community members to share their testimonies and email them as well; inform people of the Racial Equity Task Force website, social media, emails, etc
- Michael offered to invite/speak to any departments that this group needs and facilitate any other needed conversations; District Two office will coordinate any needs the subgroup will need to answer any questions regarding any recommendations

Question asked by Lauren- How can we better understand income disparity and the extent to which policies and ornaments that influence workforce supports?

- Theo answered-There might be competing interests, possibly combine with other meetings and ask other groups to ask our questions.
- Nat answered- Possibly contacting the specific people who oversee workforce development instead of inviting the President of HCC; contact more specialized people; look at inviting the State level (Maryland Workforce Exchange)
 - Minah can provide data for HCC workforce
 - Aaron suggested working with Howard EcoWorks due to their core values of workforce development and having diverse employees

Lauren and Ashley posed the idea of establishing subgroups within this committee to divide up the work.

Any remaining questions

- Minah asked what the major economic drivers of Howard County are and if small businesses are being included in that conversation
- Candace suggested contacted Office of Human Rights

Lauren went over upcoming meetings and procedure for Wednesdays

Meeting adjourned 7:45pm by Candace with no further questions.